Health and caring for kids most common barriers to work

Media Release

Released 27/11/2023

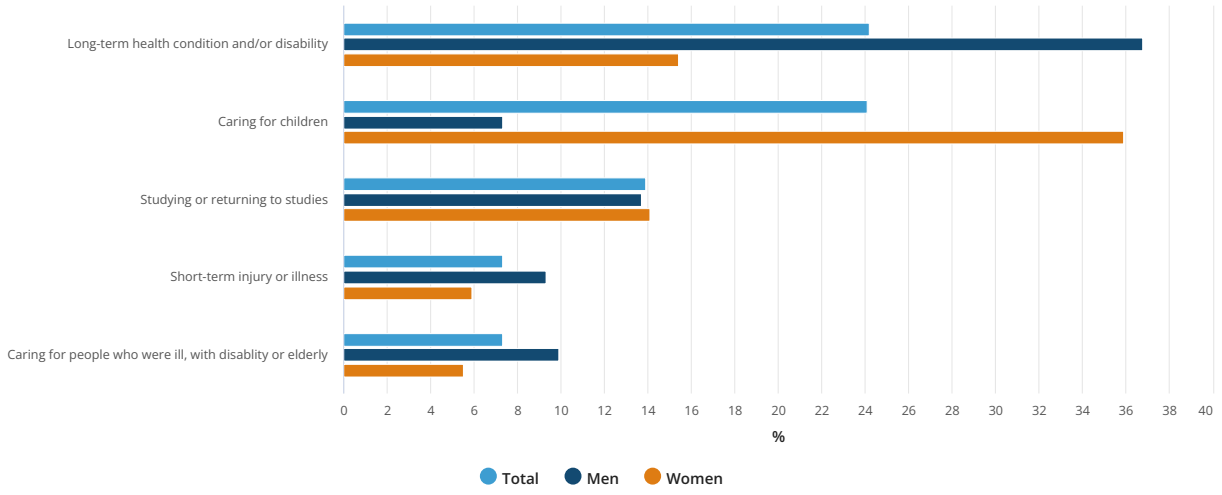
Source:
Barriers and Incentives to Labour Force Participation, Australia, 2022-23 financial year

Long-term health conditions or disability was the largest barrier to participation in the labour market for people out of work or wanting more hours, but only slightly ahead of caring for children, according to data released today by the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS).

The latest figures give insights into the barriers for around 2 million people who did not work full-time and who either wanted a job (1.3 million people) or were working part-time and wanted more working hours (730,000 people).

Bjorn Jarvis, ABS head of labour statistics, said: “Long-term health conditions or disability continued to be the most common barrier for men, and caring for children remained the greatest barrier for women.”

Main reason not available to start a job or more hours


Long-term health condition and/or disability
Caring for children
Studying or returning to studies
Short-term injury or illness
Caring for people who were ill, with disablity or elderly
0 2 4 6 8 10 12 14 16 18 20 22 24 26 28 30 32 34 36 38 40
%
Total
Men
Women

“This data helps to paint a picture of barriers that people face, based on their experiences and perspective, and their views on what incentives would be important.

“The most important incentive for women was the ability to work part-time hours. For men, it was finding a job that matched their skills and experience," Mr Jarvis said.

While the latest data gives valuable insights for a range of groups, the barriers for people without a job are particularly important for understanding acute challenges in the labour market.

People out of work with a long-term health condition

While long-term health conditions were a common barrier, it is also important to remember that not all people with a long-term health condition faced a barrier to work or working more hours, or considered it to be the main barrier.

“In fact, of the 770,000 people with a long-term health condition who were out of work and wanted to work, only around one in five said their long-term health condition was the

reason they weren't working. The rest said other barriers were more significant.

"For people with a long-term health condition, the most important incentive to get them into work was the ability to work part-time hours, with 29 per cent rating this as very important," Mr Jarvis said.

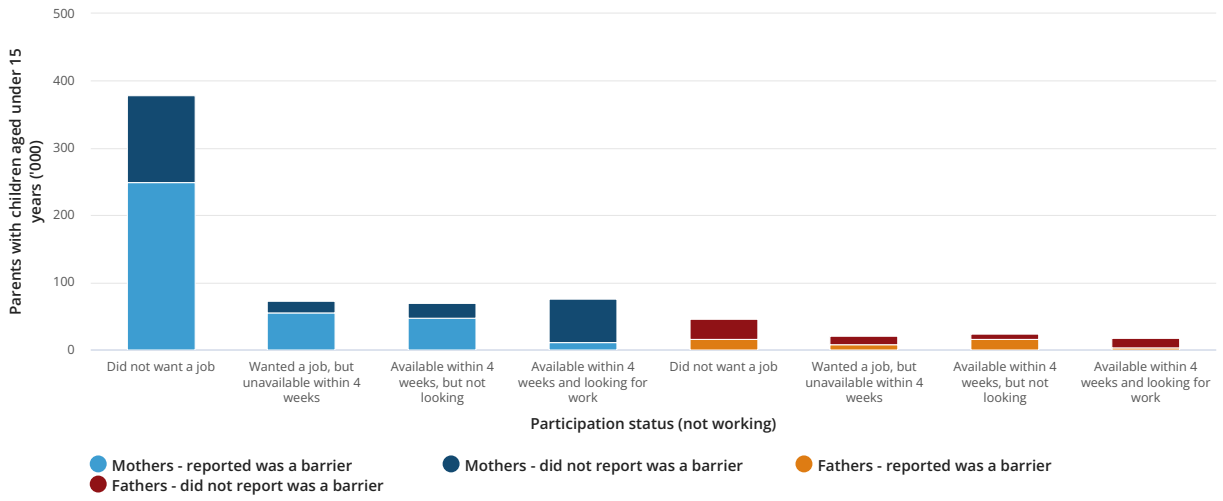
Out of work parents with children

In 2022-23, out of 5.1 million parents with children aged under 15 years, 700,000 were out of work. Around 85 per cent of out of work parents with children were mothers and more than half of them (54 per cent) had at least one child under four years old.

"Most parents with children under 15 who were out of work said that caring for children was the main barrier to employment."

"However, the data also provides important insights into preferences. About 40 per cent of out of work parents said they preferred not to work and to stay home to look after children," Mr Jarvis said.

Out of work parents - Whether they indicated caring for children was a barrier to employment


500
400
300
200
100
0
Parents with children aged under 15 years ('000)
Did not want a job
Wanted a job, but unavailable within 4 weeks
Available within 4 weeks, but not looking
Available within 4 weeks and looking for work
Did not want a job
Wanted a job, but unavailable within 4 weeks
Available within 4 weeks, but not looking
Available within 4 weeks and looking for work
Participation status (not working)
Mothers - reported was a barrier
Mothers - did not report was a barrier
Fathers - reported was a barrier
Fathers - did not report was a barrier

The most important incentives to get parents with children into the work force were:

- Ability to work school hours (56.4 per cent rated as very important).
- Ability to work part-time hours (55.9 per cent).
- Financial assistance with childcare costs (53.5 per cent).

Media notes

- People with long-term health conditions are those who reported one or more of the following conditions: Arthritis or osteoporosis, Asthma, Cancer, Diabetes, Heart disease, Mental health condition, Long-term injury, or any other long-term condition. This is different from disability, though they are combined together when reporting barriers.
- With the additional funding announced on 8 September 2022 (https://ministers.treasury.gov.au/ministers/andrew-leigh-2022/media-releases/funding-australian-bureau-statistics-better-collect-data) , the ABS will now release data on barriers and incentives every year (rather than every two years), with a range of key measures on a quarterly basis.
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